

Environmental Commission Annual Report for 2016

Throughout 2016, the City of Summit Environmental Commission (EC) worked to promote sustainability efforts in Summit through community projects, outreach and events, as well as by coordination of activities with community organizations.

As dictated by state law, the EC has seven appointed commissioners and two alternates. Currently, there is one open position. At the beginning of 2016, there was one vacant spot. That spot was filled by Jeff Hankinson, a Summit resident who has done extensive work as a volunteer on the Passaic River trails. At the end of 2016, long-time EC and Planning Board member Judy Mandelbaum resigned her position. State law requires that there be a liaison from the Planning Board on the Environmental Commission, so the Planning Board will need to decide who will fill that role on the EC in the coming year.

In addition to the EC commissioners, there is an informal group called the Green Team, which is comprised of Summit residents and City officials interested in participating on occasional projects, getting the monthly updates, and attending some meetings. The Green Team currently has about twenty members and includes, among others, Mayor Nora Radest, Council member Richard Sun (EC liaison), and Public Information Officer Amy Cairns Harrison.

2016 Projects

Home Energy Audits: With the help of City Administrator Michael Rogers and his staff, in late 2015 the City issued an RFP for [Home Performance with Energy Star](#)-certified contractors to be available to residents to do home energy audits at a reduced price. Ciel Power, LLC, committed to offering audits at \$49 a home, a substantially reduced price from the \$250-500 contractors usually charge, and to funding a mailing about the program that went to all Summit homeowners. The City goal was to have 150 homes audited prior to the end of 2017. As of the end of 2016, approximately 130 homeowners had completed Ciel energy audits. EC members helped with the City process and promoted the program online and at various events.

Rain Gardens: EC member Marian Glenn organized the installation of three rain gardens on City property, one at City Hall and two at the library. She worked with experts from the Rutgers Cooperative Extension, who designed and installed the rain gardens with the assistance of the City Public Works Department (thanks to Rick Matias). Rutgers has also committed to taking care of the rain gardens for the next two years as the rain gardens become more established.

Annual Earth Day Clean-Up: EC and Green Team members Beth Lovejoy, Judy Mandelbaum, Marjorie Fox, Kelly Moughalian, Marian Glenn, John Kilby, and Patti Schneider Smith organized the annual Earth Day Clean-Up, which took place on April 23 and May 1. About 150 volunteers of all ages collected trash and recyclables, removed invasive plants, and cleaned and woodchipped trails in five Summit locations. Of particular note is the intensive work that was done on the Passaic River trails, and the work performed by a group from local Summit business Trillion on the Wednesday before the Clean-Up weekend. They cleaned the wooded area at the intersection of Mountain Ave. and Morris Ave. across from the hospital.

Biking: Two bike plan meetings took place on February 25 and on April 20 with representatives from the EC, City administration, engineering, public relations, Dept. of Community Programs, downtown businesses, Summit schools, and resident Ted Tolles. Ted facilitated the meetings during which the group discussed a vision for biking in Summit, obstacles to safe biking and ideas for overcoming obstacles and promoting a bike culture. A draft of the bike plan is still being developed; the process was put on hold while the Master Plan was being written.

Master Plan Re-Examination: EC member Judy Mandelbaum, in her capacity as a member of the Planning Board, chaired the Circulation and Transportation Committee, and EC member Beth Lovejoy sat on that committee. EC member Marian Glenn sat on the Parks, Open Space and Community Facilities Committee.

Passaic River Trails: In 2015, with a \$10,000 grant from Overlook Hospital/NJ Healthy Communities Network and with the assistance of Union County and City staff, Judy Mandelbaum, with the able help of Jeff Hankinson, organized efforts to renovate at the trailhead on New Providence Ave. Work continued into 2016, with additional plantings added at the trailhead and clean-up work at the trailhead as well as along the trails themselves both during the Earth Day Clean-Up and at other times.

Review of Plans for the Planning and Zoning Boards: EC member and New York City architect Rick Bell, on behalf of the EC, has reviewed numerous plans to be presented to the Planning and Zoning Boards, and has provided suggestions, which usually relate to planting native species, addressing storm water runoff, and green building practices.

Summit Green Star Program: In 2015, Beth Lovejoy and Marjorie Fox (Recycling Advisory Committee chair) worked with Summit Downtown, Inc. and the Suburban Chamber of Commerce to develop and promote a new program to recognize local businesses and community organizations for their adoption of sustainable practices. A total of five actions (out of 32) in at least three of five categories qualifies participants for the Summit Green Star designation. Other green practices may be written in as well.

Currently, 34 businesses and 13 community organizations have qualified. They each get a window cling and a congratulatory letter, as well as publicity for qualifying.

Community Outreach

Communications: Many green-related posts have been made to the EC's [Summit, NJ: Talking Green. Living Green Facebook page](#), and the [Recycling Advisory Committee's Facebook page](#), as well as the [City of Summit Facebook page](#). In addition to green tips and advice, there was substantial publicity about work on the Passaic River trails, the Summit Free Market spring and fall events, and the Tenth Annual Earth Day Clean-Up, including newspapers (online and print), Facebook and Twitter.

The EC prepared a calendar of spring and summer outdoor and green events and published it via the City website and Facebook.

Sustainability Forum: Beth Lovejoy and Marian Glenn were among the speakers at a sustainability forum held at Central Presbyterian Church on March 30. The focus was on envisioning what a truly sustainable community would look like and what individuals can personally do to lessen their impact on the environment.

Educational Tables at Events: Celgene invited the EC to have informational tables at their Earth Day Fairs at both of their locations in April, which were manned by Beth Lovejoy and Patti Schneider Smith (Green Team member). On June 12, Beth Lovejoy, Patti Schneider Smith, Ruth Gais, John Kilby, Marjorie Fox and Annie Schiffer took shifts manning an EC table at the Summit Farmers Market. John Kilby, Kelly Moughalian, Patti Schneider Smith and Beth Lovejoy manned a table for the EC at Community Night on the Green in July. Marian Glenn manned a table at Community Night with information about rain gardens.

Summit Free Market: Summit Free Market had very successful spring and fall events. Former EC members Amy Cairns and Christine Lijoi served as adult mentors for the student-run committee, and several EC and Green Team members volunteered their time.

Community Garden: The fourth year for the community garden was a great success. EC member Marian Glenn has continued to have a significant role in managing the garden, and EC member Ruth Gais was also involved.

Emerald Ash Borer: EC member and Shade Tree Advisory Committee (STAC) Chair John Kilby worked diligently with the STAC to disseminate information on the Emerald Ash Borer, which is making its way across the country. There are 425 City-owned ash trees in Summit, and the STAC is working with City Forester John Linson to determine which trees can be saved.

Recognition: EC member and Recycling Advisory Committee Chair Marjorie Fox received the Union County Environmental Hero award at the Union County EarthFest on April 24 for her years of service on Summit's Environmental Commission, Recycling Advisory Committee, GreenFaith group, and many green projects and events.

The EC welcomes suggestions and comments from the mayor, members of Common Council, City staff and the community. EC meetings are open to everyone and take place in the Whitman Room, except as noted below, at 8 PM; they generally last about an hour. A list of 2017 meeting dates appears below.

Please join the Summit, NJ: Talking Green, Living Green Facebook open group page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184758811555182/>.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Lovejoy, Chairperson
City of Summit Environmental Commission

2017 Environmental Commission meeting dates:

1/9
2/13
3/20
4/17
5/15
6/19
No meetings in July and August
9/18
10/16
11/20 (in large conference room, 2nd floor, near elevator)
12/11